

CCEA GCSE - Contemporary Crafts  
Summer Series 2016

# Chief Examiner's and Principal Moderator's Report

contemporary  
crafts



## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Contemporary Crafts for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)



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# GCSE CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Overview of the Qualification

The craft industry in Northern Ireland continues to grow each year with hundreds of craft producers and makers representing a dynamic and highly skilled sector building the economy through new and established areas such as tourism. The Northern Ireland craft sector has become increasingly influential in the last ten years and in collaboration with Tourism NI, Local Government, the Arts & Cultural industry and retail sector, craft in Northern Ireland is set to continually grow and develop.

Invest NI has helped launch and nurture flourishing ground-breaking craft and design-led businesses. These young businesses creating new products through traditional and experimental craft and design techniques have helped Northern Ireland become a centre for design and craft excellence.

This has resulted in employment in the UK's creative craft and design industries growing three times faster in the UK than in the EU as a whole – Crafts Council Policy Brief UK 2016.

The GCSE Contemporary Crafts qualification can play a vital role in preparing young people for progression into employment in the majority of the creative industries.

As one of our most thriving sectors Contemporary Crafts can lead to opportunities in a range of employment choices including the arts and cultural sector, design industries, TV, film, architecture, fashion and textiles, gaming, community arts, health and wellbeing sectors, museums and heritage and others.

The GCSE Contemporary Crafts qualification provides a pathway into these sectors by developing creative skills, encouraging innovation and originality, and cultivating investigative and communication skills.

GCSE Contemporary Crafts consists of two components.

In **Component 1** (controlled assessment), students have the opportunity to:

- explore materials, techniques and processes;
- understand the importance of health and safety;
- make connections between their own work and work produced in the wider creative industries; and
- understand business models and employability options.

In **Component 2** (externally set examination), students focus on:

- understanding, responding and working to a brief.

The second year of the new GCSE Contemporary Crafts has shown immense development and experimentation by students, and has produced a wide range of exciting responses to the qualification.

And, with an increasing number of centres offering GCSE Contemporary Crafts each year, the subject is gaining importance and recognition.

## General

This year, new media and techniques have been successfully developed and introduced, while traditional and formal methods have been progressed from the initial introduction of the new GCSE.

In the second year of Contemporary Crafts candidates displayed a growing range of skills and innovation in various traditional techniques, and also in new materials and processes.

An impressive variety of teaching approaches were used for delivery of the full breadth of Contemporary Crafts, from textiles, glass, ceramics, 3D constructive materials, wood, metal and recycled materials and more.

Industry and artists references were well used and well researched by candidates and final outcomes were varied and impressive throughout centres. With a growing number of centres offering Contemporary Crafts GCSE, year two of the GCSE has shown impressive development and understanding by teachers and students, and offers strong promise for the future of the course.

## Component 1      **Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes**

An excellent series of explorative examples were given throughout centres with the best examples of development where candidates demonstrated that they had researched and examined a number of possible solutions to problems, and then showed the solution with the best creative outcome.

Where contextual research was evident, design development and candidates' understanding was shown in their thought and experimentation process.

Some areas of work were particularly impressive with furniture, textiles and 3D construction showing innovation and ambition.

Those preparatory experiments that involved a high level of personal connection by the candidate in terms of exploration in various techniques gave the best results.

Where candidates' exploration process was focused on printed material or online resources, with little personal experimentation, the work was unsuccessful and showed little personal development or creativity.

As with the previous year some centres had provided all candidates with general principles and printed publications of materials, techniques and areas of work such as Health & Safety handouts. Candidates should however also be encouraged to explore these areas further, as part of their own practice otherwise each learning file is identical. Centres and candidates must make clear which wrote in the learning file is the candidate's own and which is provided by the teacher, or printed from another source. Centres must apply JCQ guidelines on plagiarism.

Edited portfolios and learning files ranged from basic printed sheets to some outstanding and beautiful portfolios showing fluency in the handling of materials and learning files ranking as crafts pieces in themselves, and showing maturity and excellence in creativity.

## Component 2: Working to a Brief

In Component 2 candidates are required to understand how professional craftspeople and makers work in relation to a client set brief.

A significant number of candidates chose the Animal Ark or Circus Comes to Town options, and those achieving higher marks in Component 2 produced design proposals which showed their ability to communicate concepts and final outcomes through a well thought out project plan.

### Examples of Good Practice

Where centres had supported the use of talks and centre visits by working craftspeople and makers, the effect and inspiration was clearly evident in students sketchbooks and learning files. The best examples showed a thorough understanding of the selected craft and the skills required to make an appropriate and fully functioning final outcome. A range of exhibitions, galleries, studios, talks and workshops exists throughout Northern Ireland, giving excellent opportunities for candidates to experience the creative industries at work first hand.

### Industry references

The introduction of visits, talks or online films of working craftspeople and makers in the industry will vastly broaden and extend the candidates' practice and knowledge.

The significance of industry links and connections for candidates will nurture individual confidence and offer an insight into the creative industries and career opportunities. Craft industries and makers should be made accessible to candidates so that craft can be offered as a career path option.

Craft NI and the Community Arts Partnership promote free craft and makers events on a monthly basis and local Councils can direct centres to local makers agencies where young craftspeople are producing work and are available to speak about setting up crafts businesses. Listings of maker's sites and crafts organisations can also be found on the CCEA Contemporary Crafts microsite.

### Concluding Comment

The teachers should be congratulated for developing a new GCSE which is offering exciting new opportunities. The hard work and commitment shown to the qualification by teachers was clear and robust, and this was demonstrated through the work produced by students, displaying innovation, maturity and ambition.

Thanks go to all the centres for their hospitality and co-operation during the moderation visits.

## Principal Moderator's Report

### General

The work moderated this year showed an interesting and diverse range of media and techniques being used by all candidates. The standard across centres varied and included some exceptional work. Candidates had benefited from structured and well-organised courses, exploring practical craft skills both traditional and contemporary.

A few centres made good use of visits from contemporary craftspeople. Where this happened, there was evidence of an engagement with the media and a better understanding of craft as a business practice. A visit from or to, a working craftspeople, provides the opportunity to watch an expert create. Questions can be asked about qualifications, training and life decisions bringing relevance and meaning to the subject. For those who wish to include an event such as this, into their planning for next year, a list of contact organisations can be found on the Contemporary Crafts microsite.

This is the second year of awarding GCSE Contemporary Crafts examination. There was evidence of some excellent practice.

Teachers have been navigating a path through uncharted waters, relying their own personal skills and experience. Through their dedication and hard work this subject has continued to strengthen, grow and gain respect in many schools.

## **Component 1: Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes**

The Edited Portfolios in many centres contained work which confirmed the development of practical and other skills acquired throughout the course. Visual plans in the form of drawings, sketches, photographs, creative research, annotation to document progress and learning about craft technique and professional working practice and outcomes should all be evident. Moderators noted an improvement in the work submitted as part of the Edited Portfolio in most centres this year.

Some centres continue to present all the classwork activities carried out by candidates over the two years of the course. Teacher led exercises and other class learning experiences are very valuable elements of the course; however, when a centre presents work of candidates, where each candidate's entry looks very similar, unless there is additional work that displays creativity and independent thought, it becomes difficult for the moderator to agree marks in the higher levels of the Assessment Criteria.

Many centres worked to a theme, to initiate ideas and as a focus for independent, creative thought. Other centres used past examination papers and specimen materials, provided by CCEA on the Contemporary Crafts Microsite. Regardless of theme, moderators noted evidence of learning taking place and in many centres they noted an enthusiasm, depth of understanding and a genuine grasp of the subject.

In those centres that facilitated and encouraged an independent experimental approach, set against a rigorous programme of craft skills teaching, the candidates were more likely to attain successful outcomes in the higher mark range.

An increasing number of schools made use of opportunities presented via outside agencies and organisations. Fab Lab NI (<http://www.fablabni.com>) have two centres in Northern Ireland and are happy to host visits by schools and individuals, to view the most up-to-date CAD related processes. Architects, designers and contemporary craftspeople currently use 3D Printers, Laser Cutters and other digital based processes. It is, therefore, important that Contemporary Crafts candidates are provided with the opportunity to see the relevance of GCSE Contemporary Crafts, in a contemporary design and manufacturing context.

Further understanding of the context of Contemporary Craft was encouraged in many centres, by visiting craft and design events and exhibitions. These visits and experiences, add a reality to the subject and provide an opportunity for students to research issues such as sales, marketing, branding and price point.

It was positive to note that centres are now making contact with designer makers, both in Northern Ireland and beyond. This can enhance a candidate's understanding of the subject and also begin a lifelong appreciation of craft design.

Many candidates use the Internet as a tool for research and there was evidence of applications such as Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram being used, among others. However, it is pertinent at this point to reinforce the warning, that all visual images should be referenced correctly, as plagiarism is just as rife, relating to 'products', as it is with the written word. Candidates must be cautioned against copying and it is the teacher's responsibility to alert candidates to matters such as copyright and intellectual property.

Learning Files showed an improvement this year. Many submissions showed that candidates had been encouraged to transpose worksheets in their own words and to also integrate their knowledge of Health and Safety, business practice and employability into their own research, planning and annotation. In general, Learning files were more cohesive, better presented and a better aid to learning than last year.

## Component 2: Working to a Brief

Overall, the reaction to this year's Component 2: Working to a Brief, was highly positive. The most popular responses were Brief B, 'The Circus Comes To Town' and Brief C, 'The Animal Ark'. The majority of candidates worked closely to the brief, producing responses that were creative, innovative and personal. In comparison to the last examination series, moderators noted an improvement in the standard of project plans and written evaluations that were in general, more comprehensive and detailed. Some centres made use of prompt sheets, which can be of help; however, centres should appreciate that this is an examination and as such, the response must be the student's own.

The time allowance for the externally set examination was used well by most candidates, with the preparation work and final outcome in most cases, showcasing the knowledge, understanding and skills gained in Component 1.

## Agreement Trial

It was positive to see such good attendance at last year's Agreement Trial. The discussion that took place initiated and informed an amended Candidate Record Sheet, which will hopefully help make marking and moderation more straightforward. The Agreement Trial is the perfect forum for sharing good practice, Contemporary Crafts is a very young qualification and feedback from those professionals who are delivering the subject, is essential to its future development.

The Agreement Trial is also an opportunity to view exemplar work in the round. The grade exemplars, from this year's cohort, should help teachers to familiarise themselves with the standard to be applied when marking work. Most importantly, an Agreement Trial allows the opportunity to chat informally with other teachers and examine common issues concerning Contemporary Crafts.

Attendance at Agreement trials is essential for those teaching this qualification.

## Administration and Moderation

Moderators made very positive comments on centre exhibitions and displays. They very much appreciated the time and effort that centres had put into the organisation of candidates' submissions in preparation for the moderation.

Accurate use of candidate labels reduces the possibility of attributing work to the wrong candidate. If centres do not receive labels from their Examinations Officer in school, they should contact CCEA.

- There were very few issues with administration this year. Where mistakes occurred, they were quickly rectified.
- In the majority of centres, marking was deemed to be fair and the Assessment Criteria was applied with accuracy and understanding.
- Leniency was encountered in some centres where this was their first Contemporary Crafts moderation. In this situation, it was noted that centres might need some additional support around the time of marking and moderation next year.
- Generally, the work seen by moderators displayed a good understanding of the subject.
- Candidates' submissions included: fine textile work, ceramics, light metal work, wood, upholstery, plastics and up-cycled materials.
- Written evaluations were much improved across all centres.
- CAD and associated technology was used appropriately and with a high level of success in some centres.

## Concluding Statement

Thanks must be given to all those hard-working and enthusiastic teachers who have shown a belief in the value of GCSE Contemporary Crafts. In this, the second moderation period, there is sound evidence of excellent planning, teaching and the ability to enthuse candidates through making the subject real, by bringing the outside world into the classroom.

We have only to look at the increasing number of craft businesses, craft exhibitions, craft collectives and the interest being generated by the Media, with television programmes such as *'The Great Pottery Throw Down'* and the *'Great British Sewing Bee'*, to recognise the increasing interest in contemporary crafts as a viable business model.

The number of centres offering GCSE Contemporary Crafts is increasing and the subject continues to gain respect. As an alternative or complement, to other creative practical subjects it sits comfortably within the curriculum as a subject that improves creativity, inventiveness, problem-solving and practical intelligence, all highly valuable and transferable skills for our students and essential in the working world.

## Contact details

The following information provides contact details for key staff members:

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